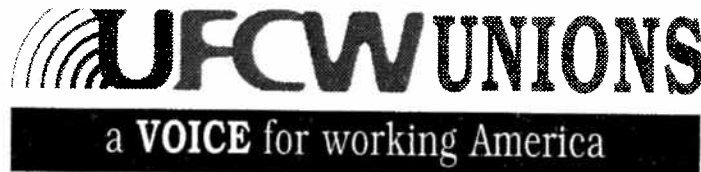


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United Food and Commercial Workers International Union

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**Statement of Chris Michalakis**  
**Legislative Director of United Food and Commercial Workers Locals 951 and 876**

**Before the House Labor Committee on HB 4316**  
**April 10, 2007**

The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) represents over 50,000 workers across the state of Michigan. Our members work in grocery stores, retail stores, food processing plants, drug stores, as well as manufacturing plants.

UFCW supports House Bill 4316, as it would protect workers by giving them a choice on attending political or religious meetings. While some may question the need for this law, UFCW has seen firsthand the consequences of these forced meetings.

In one recent organizing drive, workers were forced to attend a meeting to discuss an upcoming union election. At that meeting, the workers were told that if they joined the union and went on strike, their Food Stamp Benefits would be cut. This scared many of the workers, as many were Food Stamp recipients due to their low wages.

During another union organizing drive of Carter's supermarkets, employees were told not to support the union because the union allegedly "supported abortion." In addition to this, the workers were given pouches that contained "30 pieces of silver" with their paychecks. The company made it clear that if they supported the union, they, like Judas, would be considered betrayers. The company also made it clear that the "30 pieces of silver" they received was equivalent to the dues that they would have to pay to the union if they voted "yes". By forcing employees to attend mandatory meetings to discuss issues such as religion, politics, and unionization, the employer was able to falsely label union supporters as unethical and unchristian- even going so far as to compare them with Judas.

I could go on and on about other similar incidents at these mandated meetings- but there is not enough time. UFCW feels as though workers should have the right to not be threatened, the right to not be lied to, and the right to not have their morals and values challenged in front of their peers. Unfortunately, these Orwellian meetings occur all the time, and HB 4316 will give workers the right to just say "no."

Recently, we heard testimony on the "Employee Free Choice Act," where some on this committee opposed it because they claim to have supported "democracy in the workplace." Imagine if the same standards that are applied in workplace elections were

applied to your own elections. Would an election where your opponent could **force** your constituents to attend rallies and meetings that centered on criticizing you be considered a “free and democratic election?” Hardly. When it comes to electing a state representative, your constituents are free to attend whatever events they want- shouldn’t that same freedom be applied to where they work?

With that, I urge the committee to vote “yes” on House Bill 4316. Thank you for your time Mr. Chair, and I would be happy to answer any questions.